

**WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST**  
**ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2017**

TO: THE HONORABLE WASHBURN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Following is the proposed Washburn County Forest work plan for the year 2017. The plan gives direction and meaning to the proposed County Forest budget. The plan further defines and supplements the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and emphasizes the current needs of the County Forest and Recreational System.

**I. TIMBER HARVEST**

Timber harvests are not only important for the economic well being of Washburn County, but also for the health and vigor of the forest. This includes all aspects of the forest including wildlife, watershed protection, air quality, recreation, and many other noncommercial values. Professional implementation of proper forest management and harvest techniques is essential. The timber management goal is to produce sustained yields of forest products by scheduling timber sales as close as possible to achieve the average annual allowable cut. Compartment reconnaissance information from the Wisconsin Forest Reconnaissance System (WisFIRS) will be used to determine stands where timber cutting is needed. Washburn County Forest plans to offer for sale approximately 2,880 acres of new timber sales (excluding salvage operations due to unknown occurrences and re-advertising of defaulted timber sale contracts) in the following timber types in 2017.\*

Aspen	<u>900</u> acres
Jack Pine	<u>50</u> acres
Red Pine	<u>500</u> acres
Northern Hardwoods	<u>550</u> acres
Red Oak	<u>600</u> acres
Red Oak – Regeneration	<u>50</u> acres
White Spruce & Balsam Fir	<u>80</u> acres
Swamp Hardwood	<u>100</u> acres
White Birch	<u>50</u> acres
Other	<u>50</u> acres

\* Timber sale establishment will exceed these acreages in order to build a timber sale “bank”

Information about what timber sale establishment activities are occurring at a specific time may be obtained by contacting the Washburn County Forestry Office, 850 W BeaverBrook Ave, Spooner, WI. 54801; phone (715) 635-4490.

## II. REFORESTATION

A. Scarification of Soil (preparation of seed bed for natural regeneration):	
1. Pre-harvest	<u>300</u> acres (jack pine, birch, hardwood)
2. Post-harvest	<u>0</u> acres
B. Site preparation (site preparation for planting):	
1. Mechanical (Bracke)	<u>0</u> acres
2. Mechanical (disk trench)	<u>0</u> acres
3. Chemical	<u>0</u> acres
C. Direct Seeding	<u>50</u> acres
D. Plantings	<u>0</u> acres
E. Replanting	<u>0</u> acres
F. Prescribed burning	<u>50</u> acres

## III. TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

A. Release (removal of competition around young plantations):	
1. Hand	<u>50</u> acres
2. Chemical	<u>80</u> acres
B. Pre-Commercial Thinning	<u>0</u> acres
C. Ironwood Control (mowing)	<u>0</u> acres

## IV. COUNTY FOREST ROADS

- A. Complete all repairs to County Forest Roads damaged from July 2016 flooding. Finalize all FEMA documents for reimbursement.
- B. Evaluate need for annual mowing of all roads. Prioritize needs and mow 10 miles.
- B. Gravel portions of gas tax roads as needed.
- C. Grade and gravel other fire lanes and roads not entered into the County Forest Road system.
- D. Continue legislative efforts to eliminate gas tax program pro-rates and to increase per mile funding rate.

## V. TIMBER ACCESS TRAILS

- A. Continue to implement the Road and Access Plan.
- B. Continue to plan all roads and access to keep them to a minimum.
- C. Continue road inventory project using GPS and collect information regarding use, work needs, and future use needs.
- D. Attempt to collaborate with Sheriff's Department to provide for law enforcement efforts towards reducing illegal motorized use.

## VI. LAND ACQUISITION

- A. Follow direction of County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and as approved by Forestry Committee.
  1. Evaluate land trades as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.
  2. Evaluate land purchases as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.
  3. Pursue grant funding sources for any approved acquisition project.

## VII. SURVEYING

- A. Present to committee problem areas for certified survey or remonumentation efforts. Surveys generally needed to prevent trespass or to clarify boundaries in order to continue management.
- B. Utilize Trimble GPS unit to locate interior property corners where section corners are available.

## **VIII. FOREST PROTECTION**

### **A. Fire**

1. Improve and maintain fire lanes
2. Continue annual meeting to evaluate forest operations, facilitated by DNR Liaison
3. Consult with DNR Rangers during periods of higher fire danger in order to modify timber sale activity when needed to reduce wildfire risk
4. Support DNR fire suppression efforts when and where needed. Continue to ensure that staff is current in fire suppression training. Assistance to DNR will be focused primarily on protecting Washburn County Forest resources, with a secondary goal of providing assistance on other lands within the County. Staff resources will be allocated outside of the County only in cases of large project wildfires or in support of suppression on neighboring County Forests.
5. Continue spring ATV closure and investigate means of enforcing ordinance language.

### **B. Oak Wilt**

1. Contract with DNR to conduct monitoring flights at least once during late summer to attempt to detect new oak wilt infestations. Consider multiple flights as needed to provide coverage over all oak resources on the County Forest.
2. Aggressively treat any infestations with “frill/girdle” method using chemical and subsequent removal of infected trees and healthy trees within the buffer zone.
3. Coordinate with the Treasurer’s Office and town boards to develop an oak wilt informational sheet to be distributed with all property tax statements.
4. Continue to assist private landowners, where practical, in treating and removing oak wilt infections that have the potential to impact County Forest

### **C. Emerald Ash Borer**

1. Increase levels of black ash management with a focus on trying to convert primary stand types to alternate swamp hardwood species.
2. Continue to reduce the density of white ash within northern hardwood stands.

### **D. Buckthorn**

1. Continue to seek grant funding for buckthorn control
2. Continue to treat known buckthorn infestations.

### **E. Firewood**

1. Develop further restrictions on outside firewood being brought into campgrounds
2. Develop restrictions on firewood permits during oak wilt transmission risk periods.

## **IX. MULTIPLE USE AND ECOSYSTEM-BASED PROJECTS**

- A. Continue efforts to regenerate jack pine, white birch, balsam, red oak, and other intolerant timber types, through planting, scarification, prescribed burning, and other silvicultural harvest methods.
- B. Attempt to increase levels of prescribed burning with a focus on releasing oak seedlings from competition on oak regeneration management sites.
- C. Continue to modify and finalize northern hardwood management matrix to aid in decisions on prescriptions. Establish even aged regeneration (shelterwood) harvests, in combination with scarification where necessary, to regenerate hardwood on sites with poor quality timber.
- D. Continue to evaluate older red pine plantation growth rates and thinning response. Conduct final harvest on those older plantations where growth does not exceed mortality. Target these areas for site preparation and replanting after harvests are complete.
- E. Recalculate annual allowable harvest projects for northern hardwood and red pine sites to adjust for even aged management and site regeneration.
- F. Begin to analyze aspen reconnaissance to determine when to increase annual allowable harvest. Aspen is currently harvested at a reduced rate to compensate for the accelerated harvests that occurred in the 1970’s and 1980’s.
- G. Continue to monitor for invasive species, buckthorn in particular, and conduct eradication projects where feasible and when funding is available.

**X. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) / COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY**

- A. Continue to operate and maintain currency of GIS system and GIS data.
- B. Utilize the web based GIS / forest reconnaissance WisFIRS system (web based GIS editing system)
- C. Continue GPS logging trail inventory (complete at least 4 additional IRM unit)
- D. Investigate ways to share data and collaborate with the Land Information Department to create efficiencies.
- E. Integrate new LIDAR data into forestry operations where appropriate.

**XI. PRESCRIBED/CONTROLLED BURNING**

- A. Continue to conduct prescribed burns as fire weather allows.
- B. Concentrate prescribed burning efforts in conjunction with shelterwood harvest in red oak and on maintenance of native pine stands.
- C. Evaluate effectiveness of prescribed burning for regenerating red oak, native pine, and for controlling competing vegetation.
- D. Cooperate with D.N.R. forestry and fire control to conduct burns in a safe and effective manner, and also in a way that does not require extensive DNR field staff support.

**XII. RECREATION AREAS**

- A. Snowmobile trails
  - 1. Continue to maintain snow trails program using maintenance grant program.
  - 2. Apply for annual maintenance grant funding for un-funded trail segments.
  - 3. Complete any remaining repairs on trail segments damaged by the July 2016 flood.
  - 4. Apply for grant funding for any necessary bridge repairs or replacements and other trail improvements. Begin evaluating all bridges within the system with a goal of replacing those bridges without a rate rating or engineer's design.
  - 5. Secure land use agreements or easements for the trail 140 relocation project. Attempt to secure all necessary permits and construct as much of the trail project as possible in 2017
  - 6. Continue legislative efforts to increase revenues into the snowmobile grant program.
- B. Ski Trails
  - 1. Continue to groom Nordic and Totogatic ski trails
  - 2. Continue to try to recruit club labor to assist with trail maintenance using labor and equipment reimbursement with ATC annual impact funds.
  - 3. Complete any trail upgrades or repairs as needed after completion of the timber sale along the Nordic Wood Trail. Widen outer trail loops as part of timber sale to accommodate grooming for free-style (skate) skiing.
  - 4. Research options for replacing the ski trail groomer and request budget funds for 2018.
- C. ATV trails
  - 1. Continue to operate and maintain the Wild River, Beaverbrook, Stony Brook, Spider Lake, Trail 39, and Harmon Lake trails using County and ATV club labor.
  - 2. Continue to maintain bathroom and parking facilities in Trego, Sarona, Berry Road and Hall Road.
  - 3. Complete any repairs on segments damaged buy the July 2016 flood.
  - 4. Complete all trail rehabilitation and development projects that were carried forward from the 2016 to the 2017 budget. Focus on older grant projects before initiating work on grant contracts awarded in 2016. The following projects need to be addressed:
    - a. Thayer Road Rehabilitation
    - b. Berry Road Rehabilitation
    - c. Crystal Point Relocation

- d. Storm Damage Rehabilitation
- e. Trail 25 Rehabilitation
- f. Whalen Creek Development
- 5. Continue to work legislatively to resolve conflicting program goals on trail rehabilitation and development standards that exists between county forest trail managers and the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Council and Wisconsin ATV Association.
- 6. Continue to work legislatively to create a more user friendly permit system with the Department of Natural Resources, especially with the Storm Water Discharge Permit system.
- 7. Investigate the feasibility of moving forward with the Casey Loop ATV trail development project under current situation of conflict within the statewide program.
- 8. Consider a moratorium on any new trail development until a more collaborative relationship can be established between trail managers and the ORV Council/WATVA. County trail systems.
- 9. Postpone any decision on taking over maintenance of the Tuscobia State Trail section in Washburn County. The trail is currently under DNR management.

D. Other recreation trails:

- 1. Assist with maintenance on the Wildcat Mountain Bike Trail in Beaverbrook Township.
- 2. Attempt to develop a club, or “friends of” group to assist with maintenance of the Dugan Run Horse Trail.
- 3. Utilize annual impact fees from powerline funds to reimburse local clubs for labor, materials and equipment on non-motorized trails.

E. Parks & Campgrounds:

- 1. Totogatic Park (75 units).
  - a. Restore storage building.
  - b. Continue gravelling and leveling entrances to sites. Continue tree planning program and consider renting a tree spade attachment for the skid steer to move trees from the nursery area.
  - c. Continue the online reservation system
  - d. Develop a proposal for a new position with the Department with a split of 50% recreation duties and 50% forestry duties. Develop a plan to utilize this position to relieve some of the need for the Assistant Recreation Administrator to spend 7 days a week at Totogatic Park during the summer months.
  - e. Maintain and operate facilities.
  - f. Develop more stringent restrictions on imported firewood to help reduce risk of oak wilt and emerald ash borer infestations.
  - g. Contract with an electrician to find a way to split the power load within the campground to prevent overheating of the panels and subsequent outages during periods of high use.
  - h. Develop a park expansion plan for an additional 25 sites south of the lagoon and attempt to secure ADLP funds for the expansion.
- 2. Leisure Lake Youth Camp:
  - a. Continue to operate and maintain facilities.
  - b. Replace deteriorating roofs on the main lodge and buildings.
- 3. Sawmill Lake Campground
  - a. Replace/repair broken hand pump. Consider options for solar or propane powered pump system.
  - b. Attempt develop some method of vending firewood at the park and also prohibit import of firewood in to the facility by campers.

- c. Continue to operate and maintain facility.
  - 4 Dugan and Harmon Equestrian Campsites
    - a. Continue to operate facilities
    - b. Evaluate Harmon Lake for addition of sanitary dump station, which will also serve for Sawmill Park.
- F. Rifle Range
  - 1. Complete range improvements as identified in the federal grant funds secured for the project.
  - 2. Continue to operate and maintain facility.

### **XIII. BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES:**

- A. Forestry Department facilities**
  - 3. Forestry Shop – continue to operate and maintain facility.
  - 4. Totogatic Park Ranger Residence - continue to operate and maintain facility.
- B. Equipment**
  - 1. Continue compact road grader lease
  - 2. Replace a 4 x 4 ½ ton pickup
  - 3. Replace the Parks UTV
  - 4. Replace one snowmobile
  - 5. Rebuild beaver tail deck on equipment trailer
  - 6. Repair areas that are rusting on dump truck, sandblast and repaint
  - 7. Purchase grapple bucket attachment for skid steer
  - 8. Continue to operate and maintain existing Forestry equipment pool
- C. Wildlife Flowages**
  - 1. Continue to investigate options for removal and restoration of Black Brook Flowage area. This may require wild rice mitigation work and areas suitable for establishment of rice should be researched.
  - 2. Evaluate feasibility of continued existence of Conroy Dam if any engineering requirements are mandated by DNR in 2017.
  - 3. Complete any necessary engineering required by DNR for the Davis Flowage Dam
  - 4. Assist DNR with the Taylor Lake Flowage removal project where appropriate.

### **XIV. SPECIAL PROJECTS, GRANTS AND FUNDING**

- A. Wildlife grant (\$.05 per acre grant for wildlife habitat)**
  - 1. Maintain intolerant timber types (scarification for jack pine, white birch, oak, and balsam; prescribed burning for red oak and pine).
  - 2. Purchase Spike herbicide for DNR treatment of wildlife openings.
  - 3. Fund other projects as approved in the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- B. Sustainable Forestry Grant – Buckthorn:** The Forestry Department received a grant of \$20,000 to provide funding for buckthorn eradication. The project will focus on infestations in the Stinnett and Frog Creek Townships. Portion of this project will be completed in 2016 and the remainder of grant funds should be targeted for expenditure in 2017.
- C. Sustainable Forestry Grant – LTE:** The Department received a grant of \$20,000 to hire professional level LTE's to assist with backlogged timber sale establishment. \$9,000 in funds are proposed to be expended in 2016 with balance budgeted for 2017.
- D. Federal Sport Fish & Wildlife Restoration Funds – Minong Rifle Range:** Grant funds were

awarded to upgrade the Minong Rifle Range and projects are proposed for completion in 2017.

**XV. Staff / Personnel**

- A. Investigate opportunities to provide law enforcement for forestry, parks and trails after the 2011 decision by the Sheriff to pull the Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff onto road duty.
- B. Hire a summer intern position to assist with timber sale establishment.
- C. Utilize the Gordon prison crew where feasible, especially with Parks projects and conifer hand release.
- D. Develop a position description and seek approval for a new Technician position with 50% recreation and 50% forestry duties. Complete all necessary preliminary approvals prior to the July 2017 County Board meeting.
- E. Consider eliminating or reducing the use of LTE's if the position is approved.

**XVI. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Time Standards**

- A. Coordinate with Washburn Team Leader and other Division of Forestry staff to consolidate as many time standards hours as possible into a minimum number of staff in order to create efficiencies.
- B. Focus time primarily on timber sale establishment. The Liaison Forester or County Forest Foresters will act as lead forester on these projects. DNR staff will work under the direction of these lead foresters while conducting marking duties.
- C. Heavy equipment hours on scarification and other site prep duties will be conducted at the discretion of the County Forest Administrator.
- D. Look for opportunities to develop longer range and better plans for the use of the time standard hours. In addition, Washburn County Forestry will be requesting detailed reports on which staff have allocated hours to the County and what work duties they performed.

**XVI. Forest Certification** – Continue to participate in SFI and FSC forest certification programs. Monitor standards for compliance. Continue efforts to prevent measurement standards from becoming too restrictive.